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C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 000067

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TAGS: [PTER](#) [PREL](#) [KJUS](#) [SY](#) [LE](#)
SUBJECT: SPECIAL TRIBUNAL BEIRUT OFFICE REPORTS CONTINUING
LEBANESE COOPERATION

REF: A. THE HAGUE 18
[1](#)B. 09 BEIRUT 1130
[1](#)C. BEIRUT 16
[1](#)D. BEIRUT 47

Classified By: Ambassador Michele J. Sison for reasons
1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: The work of the Beirut investigative team of the Special Tribunal for Lebanon (STL) is progressing smoothly, according to Valerio Aquila, head of the STL's Office of the Prosecutor in Beirut. The recent high-profile resignations of senior STL staff in The Hague were expected and their impact in Beirut was minimal, Aquila added. Aquila said he had not been denied a single witness interview yet and that the GOL had been fully cooperative. Political figures formerly or currently affiliated with the March 14 coalition continue to voice their support for the STL. End Summary.

RESIGNATIONS NOT HAVING ANY EFFECT

[1](#)2. (C) The STL Beirut field office's operations are moving ahead smoothly, Valerio Aquila, head of the STL Office of the Prosecutor (OTP) in Beirut, told Legatt on January 14. Despite media speculation of trouble inside the STL after the recently announced departures of senior STL officials in The Hague (ref A), the resignations were expected and well managed, giving the organization adequate time to adjust, Aquila explained. Aquila anticipated an uptick in tempo in the coming six months and predicted that the investigation would proceed faster than before, though he declined to discuss details.

GOL COOPERATION CONTINUES TO BE STRONG

[1](#)3. (C) Aquila said he had not been denied a single interview yet and that the GOL had been fully cooperative. The Lebanese Office of the Prosecutor General, headed by Saeed Mirza, continued to process all of the OTP's witness requests, executing them in conjunction with Lebanese law enforcement and calling witnesses (ref B). (Note: Defense Minister Elias Murr recently told us that he had extended an offer to provide all protection and legal services to the Beirut STL office (ref C), but the status quo appears to remain unchanged. End note.)

SUPPORT FOR STL SOLID BUT QUIET

¶4. (C) Despite the reigning spirit of political reconciliation in Beirut, figures formerly or currently affiliated with the majority March 14 coalition continue to voice their support for the STL. Prime Minister Saad Hariri told CODEL McCain on January 8, "I will not make concessions to Damascus because the Special Tribunal is not negotiable" (ref D). Both Amine and Sami Gemayel of Kataeb have also recently affirmed their support for the STL. Even Druze leader Walid Jumblatt, who withdrew from March 14 in July, told CODEL McCain, "We do not want the Tribunal diluted by international politics." During his December 2009 visit to Beirut, STL Prosecutor Daniel Bellemare underscored to the Ambassador the strong assurances of support he had received from all political figures with whom he had met.

¶5. (C) COMMENT: The STL remains a charged issue in Lebanon but, with the exception of legal grandstanding by recently released former suspect General Jamil al-Sayyed, it has not received significant press attention of late. Meanwhile, PM Hariri has told us that he raised the issue with Syrian President Bashar al-Asad during his December visit to Damascus, and that he had described the STL as being in the hands of the international community. End Comment.

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